

Congressman no longer critical of Flight 93 design

By VICKI ROCK

Daily American Staff Writer

Friday, July 25, 2008 6:12 AM EDT

A congressman who was vocal in his opposition to the Flight 93 memorial design has decided to drop his criticism.

U.S. Rep. Tom Tancredo is a Republican representing the 6th District of Colorado. He was a presidential candidate from April 2, 2007, to Dec. 20.

Two years ago, the congressman asked the National Park Service to revamp the memorial. Last November, he asked the agency to direct the Flight 93 Federal Advisory Commission to scrap the plan and start over. At that time, he said the original design, first called the Crescent of Embrace, was questionable because of the crescent's prominent use as a symbol in Islam and the fact that the hijackers were radical Islamists.

In mid-June, Tancredo met with Gordon Felt, president of the Families of Flight 93, John Reynolds, chairman of the federal advisory commission, and Sascha Burns, who represents the Families in congressional relations. On Thursday, Tancredo's spokesman, T.Q. Houlton, said the congressman has decided to refrain from criticism in the hope that some resolution of the controversy can be achieved.

"I simply want the memory of the crew and passengers of Flight 93 to be memorialized with the honor and dignity they deserve," Tancredo said in a written statement. "I do not wish to contribute to continued turmoil which, at this point, seems pointless."

Felt said they had a productive meeting. The congressman listened intently to his description of the design and how it has evolved through the development process.

"I spoke of how the families support the design overwhelmingly and are working hard to secure the sacred ground and insure that on the 10th anniversary we are able to dedicate the most hallowed aspects of the memorial," Felt said. "Congressman Tancredo was very receptive to our conversation and clearly understood that the families were not willing, or unwilling, participants in a plot to inject religious symbolism into the Flight 93 National Memorial."

He said the congressman's response was similar to "all other rational questioners of the design."

"Once he was presented with facts and descriptions of the design, he saw through the weak and biased arguments of the conspiracy theorists," Felt said.

Felt said he continues to support the current design. He is committed to working with the Families of Flight 93, the National Park Service, the National Park Foundation, the Flight 93 Task Force and the Flight 93 Federal Advisory Commission to see the project through to completion.